

## A Business Assistance Challenge: Launch, Do, Grow

### Summary

How can the City make it easier for first-time entrepreneurs to launch, do business, and grow in Long Beach?

### Challenge description

The City wants to find better ways to support entrepreneurs starting a business for the first time. First-time entrepreneurs often arrive at City Hall without accurate information on the steps needed to lawfully start a business and leave frustrated when they cannot submit an application because they do not have their paperwork in order. Long Beach offers a variety of business education, assistance and incentive programs that provide information on how to start, operate, and grow your business in the city. Information on everything that Long Beach has to offer is available, yet, it does not reach entrepreneurs in the early stages of business development. This could stem from limited and inconsistent internal and external communication, as well as lack of early-stage engagement with entrepreneurs.

Currently, information on business support services and processes exist on various websites and platforms and this information is communicated passively. There is no central location where all the information is housed and no system that proactively engages the target community the City seeks to support. Furthermore, the information available is not customized to individual business needs. A restaurateur will have to go through a very different set of processes than a healthcare start-up and tailored guidance is not readily available.

In order to meet business needs more effectively, the City seeks solution(s) that will address one or more of the following point listed below. All proposed strategies should extend the City's capacity to serve entrepreneurs beyond its current capacity.

- Effectively triage business service activity and provide customized next steps based on the business classification and the business model. An example of providing triage might be helping an entrepreneur deal with conflicting information from plan checkers, interpret the municipal code, or understand the sequence in which certain tasks should be performed. In these instances, the entrepreneur may require further direction and connection. These examples are only illustrative and do not encompass all situations when triage might be necessary.
- Build on the City's current effort to provide a true one-stop shop for all business processes and service information across the larger business services network—not just City-sponsored services but those provided by federal, state, and county government, colleges, non-profits, and community groups. The City is currently focusing resources on creating an online one-stop shop and is interested in proposed solutions that may include elements that enhance or compliment current online efforts. Proposed complimentary solutions do not have to be digital in nature.
- Communicates clearly to entrepreneurs. Uses diverse communication strategies and media to educate entrepreneurs on the necessary steps to open a licensed business in Long Beach,

business assistance programs, and how they can best prepare to ensure timely approval of submissions. This may be through any of the following: marketing materials, a communications campaign that is proactive in nature, digital content to compliment StartupLB (see below), dynamic social media communication, and two-way communication channels, such as meet ups and workshops. This list is exemplary only and the City looks forward to learning about other dynamic possibilities.

- Reaches diverse and traditionally hard to reach populations such as those with limited English proficiency, limited computer literacy, limited access to internet, or groups who historically have not actively engaged with City government.

**Within two years the City wants to see notable performance improvements against some or all of these key performance indicators:**

- Increase in successful first-time applications for business licenses;
- Increase in number of permit application packages that are complete at the first submission, including building permits, business license application, and other city-managed processes;
- Increase in user satisfaction, based on a survey of applicants.

#### Further information

- The [2014 Economic Development Report](#) provides information about the programs available as well as the City's framework for economic development.
- City of Long Beach Businesses: <http://www.longbeach.gov/businesses/>
- Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Teams: <http://www.bloomberg.org/program/government-innovation/innovation-teams/>
- Small Business Administration "Start up in a Day" Challenge: <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-initiatives/startup-day>